

The HUD Tenant Bill of Rights to Organize

Adopted by National Alliance of HUD Tenants on April 19, 1998

The right of residents to organize is fundamental to our human right to decent, safe, sanitary, and affordable housing. Unfortunately, harassment by owner and management representatives of tenants who assert these rights is a widespread problem in HUD-assisted housing across America. The recent illegal arrests of organizers in Los Angeles and Dallas for leafletting or meeting with residents in their own apartments are only the most dramatic instances of the institutional racism and petty tyrannies which persist in HUD housing. The climate of fear and intimidation which results is profoundly undemocratic.

HUD has done little to protect tenants and organizers or to enforce its own regulations protecting the right to organize. Instead, some at HUD have sided with or rewarded owners who harass tenants. It is time for HUD to affirm that tenants do not check their moral and constitutional rights at the door of their HUD-assisted homes.

WE, the undersigned, tenants of HUD-assisted housing and their supporters, do therefore affirm and adopt this HUD TENANT BILL OF RIGHTS:

- 1) the right of residents to form tenant unions which meet regularly, are democratic, representative, and independent of non-resident owners, management agents or local housing agencies
- 2) the right to organize and assert their rights as residents without obstruction, harassment, or retaliation from owner or management representatives, including the right to grieve concerns to HUD, elected officials, the press and other agencies
- 3) the right of residents to leaflet and door knock their neighbors to form independent tenant associations without notice to or permission from owners or management agents
- 4) the right of non-resident organizers to contact residents and leaflet a property without tenant invitation or prior owner permission or notice
- 5) the right of residents to use appropriate common space or meeting facilities, free of charge, to either organize or to consider any issue affecting the management of the property without management or resident employees present, at residents' option
- 6) the right of individual residents to timely review of any documents pertaining to their tenancy
- 7) the right of residents to be treated with dignity and respect by owners representatives

To implement these rights, WE DEMAND that HUD:

- 1) Codify these rights in HUD's Handbooks and a Model Lease required for all tenants and establish clear sanctions for owners, public agencies and management agents who violate them
- 2) Require that owners and management agents recognize legitimate, independent tenant unions, and to treat tenants, their organizations and representatives with respect
- 3) Publicize tenants rights through annual distribution of Tenants Rights brochures to every family in HUD housing, in appropriate languages
- 4) Provide sensitivity training to HUD field staff and owners/managers in tenants' rights
- 5) Take strong enforcement actions against owners who violate tenants' rights and sanction HUD staff who support owners that harass tenants